1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38
Morwa

any sacred place wearing a gown. The Morwa have no tutelary genii, like the Katab.

The priest plays a prominent part at the installation of the chief. He gives the chief a special draught to drink, and then ceremonially shaves and washes him, afterwards clothing him in a gown. The Morwa chief is, like his neighbours, the possessor of a sacred sword, the magical emblem. At the installation of a new chief the priest fetches the sword from the house of the late chief. It is carefully wrapped up and none may look on it except the priest and chief. The priest slays a goat and chicken (provided by the chief) and rubs the blood (mingled with water) on the sword, saying: "Sword I have brought you here that you may bless us. Let the chief and this town have prosperity and may no evil come, even to a child. For I perform the rites my father performed. Let not the chief die early, and may no sickness overtake him or his wives or his children." On each Friday for the first month or so of his reign, and at intervals throughout each year, the chief summons the priest to bring the sword. They drink some beer together, and then the priest removes some of the wrappings and shows a part of the knife to the chief, saying "Do you see the sword?" The chief replies, "I do and I rejoice." The priest then says, "Sword, let no evil come on the chief or his people or on any of our domestic animals. For I am of the ancient stock of this country, and these are the rites my forefathers performed."

A year after the installation the concluding rites are performed with feasting and sacrifice. The sword again plays a principal part, and the chief is then for the first time clothed in a black gown. Formerly he could only wear a white gown. The sword is a great asset to the chief; for, apart from the security which it confers on the owner, it is also a source of income. The possessors of minor titles believe that an occasional view of the sacred weapon will secure them also in their offices. They are permitted therefore to view the sword on payment of what must be, to them, a considerable sum.

The Morwa were head-hunters like their neighbours, and their rites were similar to those described in the Katab report. They did not take the heads of Katabs whom they killed, but they took their bodies home and buried them, and danced over the grave.

2: Gunn E-4 (no date) 1956 FF38 Katab FF38

the same way for the death of her brother's wife, retiring to her brother's village for the prescribed period.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Among the Katab, the "high god" is called Gwaza and, according to Meek, appears to be associated with the sky and the moon. Individuals address more or less personal prayers to Gwaza on first seeing the new moon, though it is more usual for prayers to be directed towards the ancestral spirits as intermediaries.[89] It is believed that the majority of the spirits of the dead are content to remain in their abode "Lahira" (a Moslem term), but discontented and evil spirits may return to the world to trouble men. There is no general belief in reincarnation, though the dead are believed sometimes to be reborn, especially in the case of posthumous children of men who have met an untimely death.

According to Meek, the senior male of each household offers thanks for the yearly supply of food at harvest time with the first fruits at the graves of the ancestors. The services of the high priest (*magaji.n elenowum*) are not ordinarily required; it seems that he is concerned primarily with placating spirits of the lineage whose identity cannot be determined, and with those believed to be troubling not lineal but collateral descendants. Some original connection between the ancestor and head-hunting cults is suggested by the fact that the *elenowum* was custodian of skull trophies.

Also associated with the ancestral cult is the public cult of the *obwai* or "tutelary genius" (Hausa, *dodo*) who seems to represent generally the plurality of ancestral spirits and particularly the spirit of the ancestor of the clan or lineage. From the Katab, specifically, Meek was unable to get what he regards as a satisfactory account of the cult and the beliefs surrounding it, "which," he concludes, "is not surprising, as the . . . cult was found in many instances to [be] an importation from neighbouring tribes or to have been derived from the Aku clan, whose *obwai* takes precedence over all the others."[90]

The cult has the appearance of a male secret society and is used largely as a means of disciplining women and children; "if a theft is committed in the village the shrill voice of the *obwai* is heard." An *agwam obwai* presides over the cult in each lineage (village). The main festival introduces farming operations just before the first rains, and the whole community brings to the *obwai* hut[91] offerings of beer, beniseed, goats, chickens and porridge. The senior men pour the beer into the common pot in the *obwai* hut, leaving some for the women and younger people, who partake outside. The *agwam* then drinks a little from the pot and asks the *obwai* to grant them a successful farming season. A general feast follows, dancing begins, and the voice of the *obwai* is heard speaking from a place of concealment in the roof. There is another festival at harvest, and the voice is heard a month before, warning the people to make preparations and to "desist from idle disputes." The *obwai* actually appears, in the form of a masked dancer, only biennially.[92]

Rain-making rites also appear to be connected with the ancestors, each lineage having its rain-maker whose rites are associated above all with a particular

[89] God and sky (*choadza*) both appear rather to be derived from *za*, rain, however; see Ikulu religious beliefs, below, p. 86.

[90] Meek's criteria of coherence of belief are not stated; it seems not impossible that the language problem, or even an understandable reticence may have lain at the root of his difficulty in obtaining a complete account of Katab beliefs.

[91] The only round hut in the village, accommodating 30–40 people and provided with mud benches.

[92] What the term "obwai" actually means to Katab, initiated or uninitiated, is not clear. From Reynolds' account of it among Kaje, it seems that members of the cult understand the term to apply primarily to the hollowed-out "seed" (pod, or "gourd"?) of *Oncoba spinosa* used to produce the spirit-voice, though the uninitiated understand "obwai" to be the name of the spirit whose voice is heard. In view of the supposed western origins of the cult it appears significant that Edgar in his Gbari dictionary enters *obwe, obwwa* as "*Cucurbita lagenaria*: a calabash, gourd." No embodiment of *obwai* appears among Kaje, but among Katab and Kagoro *obwai* may appear as a masked figure.

2: Gunn E-4 (no date) 1956 FF38 Katab FF38
Kagoro

woman in the stress of childbirth. A traditional fine of one goat was—and presumably still is—paid by the offender to the *niewhop* of the woman's husband's clan; it is said that the offender often emigrated, presumably as a result of ritualized public ridicule.

Burial

According to Tremearne, death is traditionally ascribed to "the evil wishes of some person." When a death occurs, women related to the deceased gather and wail through the remainder of the day, and horns may be sounded, while people—not precisely identified by Tremearne—collect, often coming from neighbouring villages. The corpse is wrapped in a mat for interment, normally in a fresh grave: women and children remain indoors[**] during the proceedings. A fowl or goat may be sacrificed, the spilling of blood being apparently part of the rites, and eaten by the (male?) kin. The decanter-type grave is located, according to Temple, close to the porch of the house if the deceased had children, or outside under the shelter of the wall. Seven days later, adult males (presumably of the lineage or clan) gather for three days of drinking and feasting, drumming and horn-blowing, after which men of the deceased's household shave their heads, and the widows (normally clean shaven) let their hair grow for a month and remove the *oyam* until remarriage. Between the day of burial and the final feast, the hoes used to dig the grave are left out of doors.[**]

Under some circumstances, apparently, ancestral skulls were exhumed and preserved, but the more significant details of Kagoro practice in this connection are precisely those which are lacking in all accounts.

Temple's account of beliefs in an after-life held by Kagoro contains contradictory features which it is impossible to reconcile on the basis of available evidence. According to Temple, the Kagoro believe that there is a stream dividing life from death, beyond which the spirits of the dead reside; here, primary mates are united, with their unmarried children. On the other hand, they believe that all souls survive and become ghosts, but that they may be reborn in the body of a descendant, and live once more as ordinary mortals. The "ghosts" must be constantly propitiated with food and drink, for neglect would be followed by punishment. They are regularly consulted, particularly about war and hunting, by the elders, who spend three days in the sacred grove.

The second account is presumably based on Tremearne. Smith, investigating some 40 years later, states that "Kagoro males say that there is no survival after death, though reincarnation sometimes occurs".[**]

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Kagoro beliefs and practices appear to conform generally to the Katab pattern already described, though detail comparable to that supplied by Meek for Katab (or by Reynolds for Kaje, described below, pp. 115–16) are in great part lacking.

According to Tremearne, the supreme god is called Gwaza (as among Katab proper and various other members of the Katab Group already described), "a beneficent spirit who helps them against the ghosts of their dead ancestors." Gwaza is popularly invoked at each new moon to bring health and good luck, and also, according to Temple, in time of drought, for rain. Smith, though he appears to concede a belief in a supreme god (Gwaza), implies strongly that such belief does not enter into the annual cycle of rituals.

Regarding the spirits of the dead, Smith states flatly that "no cult of ancestor worship was developed" by Kagoro, "since Kagoro males say that there is no

[**] Cf. information on *obosi* under *Initiation*, above, and *Religious Beliefs*, below.
[**] It is not always clear whether Tremearne is describing Kagoro or Kaje practices (or both). It is to be presumed that Tremearne (as Temple) is describing the burial of an adult male.
[**] The circumstances and implications of this statement are discussed below, under *Religious Beliefs*.

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Kagoma

585 of marriage before leaving them alone together. The following morning the groom's mother gives a feast to the inmates of her own house, and a month later the bride's mother sends two calabashes of tuo to her son-in-law's house, whence he distributes them to his friends and to the elders of the village as proof that the marriage has taken place.

587 When a man marries a second time the above formula is omitted. He gives the girl's parents a hoe and 4,000 cowries, after which the girl goes to him of her own accord, but if she delays doing so for more than a year after the dower is paid he can claim it back.

586 Desertion is considered no crime, and if a woman leaves her husband soon after the marriage, the dower is refunded to him by his wife's parents, but if she has remained with him for four or five years he has no claim. Her new husband pays her parents a hoe and 4,000 cowries.

575 173 The difficulties that have arisen from this laxity of morals are met by the following device:

"As far as this district is concerned the idea of forming a 'Dodo' society originally started in the village of Agabi, a number of years ago. Two men were bewailing the fact that their wives were constantly running away from them and that their children were getting out of hand. They put their heads together to seek a remedy.

"Eventually they took a gourd from the 'Kukan Chikki' tree, and after scraping it hollow, placed some kind of parchment over its mouth. In the middle of the night this was blown with terrifying effect (the noise is very like that produced by a comb and piece of paper). The women were very frightened and hid themselves. They were subsequently told this was the voice [176] of the 'Dodo'—a mythical spirit well known in Haussaland—rebuking them for their misdeeds. The women all promised atonement.

"The news of the Agabi 'Dodo' soon spread and people came in from the neighbouring villages, curious to hear all about it. Men were let into the secret, but had to swear under penalty of death never to tell their women or children the real origin of this new-found power over them.

575 [344] "The 'Dodo' soon became universal in every village, and each had its own particular 'kurmi,' where 'Dodo' gatherings took place. This tended to still further impress and mystify the women. Only married men were eligible for election, and not until they had been married for two or three years.

"As a rule, initiation into the 'Dodo' society was reserved until such time as there were some ten or twenty young married men ready to be elected. Their wives were informed of the impending ceremony, and on the appointed day had to cook goats or chickens provided by the candidates. The cooked

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the day that they begin to walk their father invites the whole village to a beer orgy. 852

The ceremonies that take place upon death are identical with those practised by the Jaba. A Kagoma widow, however, only mourns for one month and can marry again in the second. Under no circumstances can a woman inherit. 764 [587] [428]

They believe that a departed spirit can return to earth as a shooting star and re-enter upon a fresh sphere of human existence. 775

Sons inherit the whole property, but the younger brother of the deceased has the first choice of the widows. Failing sons, brothers inherit. 428

They believe in an all-powerful god. 776

KAGORO.

AUTHORITIES:

Mr. H. F. Mathews. Major Tremearne.

The Kagoro have a population approaching some 8,500 in number and occupy an area of about 110 square miles in the Jemaa Division, on the northern and western faces of a ridge of mountains, known as Kagoro, which runs from Bauchi into Nassarawa. 131 161

Most of the towns are built at the foot of these hills, where the land is very fertile and large crops of corn, principally maiwa, which is almost exclusively used for drink, and beans are raised. The beans are the property of the women and are grown on trellises, like vines, and form the principal food of the people. Manure from fowls, and goat-dung and ashes are used. Cattle are not kept and there are no markets. 361 241 [273] [23]

In old days the Kagoro lived underground and went to their farms through underground tunnels, owing, they say, to the place being over-run with wild beasts. The villages are now surrounded with high cactus hedges, which grow to a height of from twelve to fifteen feet. In most cases each compound and each field is encircled by one of these. At the entrance the hedges overlap on the principle of a swivel-ring for keys. The walls of the huts are of mud and the roofs of thatch, which latter are renewed every year after the harvest. Each woman has her own house, which is accessible through one, or sometimes two, doors, two and a half to three feet in height. The entrance commonly leads into a low narrow verandah, but sometimes straight into a sort of hall which runs along the whole width of the house, and is used for storing pots, etc. A feature of the doorways is that each one is double and in between each is 173 361 342

3:Temple G-4 (no date)1922 FF38 Katab FF38 Kagoro

841 775 ripening a fowl is sacrificed and its blood, together with the leaves of the "Karran-Kwoi" and "tongwa," is put in a hole in the centre of the farm.

776 782 The spirits are subject to Gwaza, the supreme and beneficent god who helps the living against evil ghosts. In drought the people pray to him for rain, facing first to the south, and then to the other points of the compass. The priests kill a fowl and place its blood, with a few of its feathers, on a stone two feet high in the sacred grove (at times some of its flesh is added), gia is then thrown three times on each corner of the stone and three incantations are spoken. Gwaza is believed to consume the offering and the petition is always granted.

776 821 When the new moon rises the people pray to Gwaza for health and luck, and rejoice, but on this occasion no beer is drunk. They believe that the sun is a ball of fire, which falls into the water at night and becomes extinguished, but that it travels back to the east at night, at a higher level, and gets fresh fire from the supreme god. If a tree or house is set on fire by lightning the people must put out their old fires and kindle them afresh from this heavenly source.

761 The Kagoro believe that there is a stream dividing life from death, and that when a man falls sick his soul leaves his body and journeys to this stream, where the spirits of the dead, who are assembled on the further shore, decide whether he may cross the bridge. Sometimes the decision is so long delayed that the spirit shrinks, and when it returns to the body has lost its full command. A first husband and wife will always come to the brink of the stream to greet the other, and both parents will come to welcome an unmarried child.

774 The soul leaves the body during sleep, as is proved both by dreams and by the fact that a person suddenly awakened has not full command of his faculties, which shows that the soul has not had time to return to the body. It is possible that the wandering soul may be caught and beaten, or its bowels or liver taken to a magic cave in the grove by the souls of evil men, who devour it. These evil souls glow like fire, which light is visible to the priests alone. When summoned to the injured man the priest calls out several names and the afflicted recognises [754] that of his tormentor, who is summoned and shut into a room [683] where a fire is burning, on which pepper is thrown, and there he is left until he promises restitution. If he fails to keep his promise he is sold as a slave, or choked.

No inanimate object has a soul, but the souls of animals may be born into the children of their slayer—it is doubtful, however, whether they can leave the living body.

778 688 Women and children are not allowed near the sacred groves, nor may they speak of spirits under penalty of death.